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## BOOK NOTICES.

THOUGHTS ON THEISM, with Suggestions toward a Public Religious Service in Harmony with Modern Sciences and Philosophy. London: Trübner. 1880.

Deanthropomorphization is the fashion of the day with churchmen who are anxiously aware of the need of setting their house in order, and perhaps nowhere has such a clean sweep been attempted as in this little book, which is an earnest plea for the establishment of a "New Catholic Church, dedicated to the worship of God and the service of Man." This god bears a strong family resemblance to "The Unknowable" of Mr. Spencer, and, indeed, his (?) genealogy is not left uncertain or disowned, for many quotations from that doctor of the new divinity and his school are allowed to witness to it. God is "the Formless Infinite," "That which Is," "Pure Ens," "Whom we do not *know*," and yet who is "an *intuitional* truth or immediate fact of *consciousness*!" He "is never known as possessing faculties or properties or qualities," and "This seems to be the groundwork of a true theology!" The authors join hands with the Rev. Canon Curteis in allowing us "to accept—if charity so requires—as the common basis for theological reunion the agnostic formula, '*Something Is*'!" Hitherto theology has been taken to be a kind of science, but now it is found to be nescience, and it would almost appear that Heine was more than half right when he jestingly claimed the last word of Theism to be Atheism. Between the finite and this Infinite, man and god, thus *per impossibile* conceived, "there is no ratio of likeness, no binding links can make them one; there is nothing common to both except the fact of existence," if, indeed, even "existence"—*pace* Hegel—can be affirmed of Pure Being; and, nevertheless, it seems good to our authors to make this the basis of a true Cult! "Thy will be done," will be the cry of future saints, calling on the name of the Nameless and addressing the characterless Void. This *reductio ad absurdum* may be recommended to any who are tempted to rationalize the historical religions. Religion is concrete, poetic, imaginative; the highest emotions, grouped and impersonated, are its ideals; its gods are all instinct and permeate with humanity; its nourishment and delight are *Aberglaube* of some kind or other, and such genial and naïve "superstition" has always abounded in the ages and lands of Faith; and wise reformers, like Comte, following the Catholic tradition, have known better than to prune these luxuriances to the quick. Religion refuses to live in an artificial vacuum, like the author's. To bring science and philosophy into her house is to introduce dynamite unawares to desecrate and destroy; and that they have a dumb feeling of this fact is shown by their book having another side, where we find "*Aberglaube* reinvading," symbolical ascription allowed, and so forth. But, best of all, their Religion is as thoroughly and literally anthropomorphic as their theology is without form and void; and we find them brought in the end to endorse the truly humanitarian creed of Principal Caird, that Religion's paramount aim is "to seek with all our might the highest welfare of the world we live in, and the realization of its ideal greatness and nobleness and blessedness." It would be ungenerous to expose the rather crude philosophemes—on subject and object, fate and free-will, etc.—of a book that ends so nobly and well. By way of amen, may I quote one favorite sentence: "God is for man the common-place book where he registers his highest feelings and thoughts, the genealogical tree on which are entered the names that are dearest and most sacred to him."

J. BURNS-GIBSON.